

January 6, 2007

**REFUGEE WORKING GROUP
Salt Lake County Council Chambers
2001 S State, North Building, Room 1100
Salt Lake City, UT**

Introduction

Palmer DePaulis welcomed the group and excused Mayor Corroon. He reminded everyone that the goal of this working group is to make recommendations on filling some of the gaps in refugee services to Governor Huntsman and Mayor Corroon. Mr. DePaulis also announced that the Governor's Budget contains \$100,000 for refugee capacity building and encouraged those with legislative contacts to make sure they inform their legislators about the importance of this appropriation. This money, if appropriated, would be available in July 2007.

The goal of tonight's meeting is to review the Refugee Service Gaps document that was posted on the Internet. This document is a working draft and is based on public meetings, individual feedback, and other information received from numerous sources. The document will be updated based on information received tonight and revised copies will be made and distributed tonight, as well as being posted on the Internet. We will also attempt to address one of the gaps on the documents by addressing how we want to find solutions to these gaps. This will help us test the approach we use when addressing future gaps. We are open to changing the process and doing what works best for the working group. Attendees indicated they were comfortable with this approach.

Review Summary of Gaps

Mr. DePaulis reviewed the summary of gaps document and opened up the floor for comment and discussion.

A member of the audience indicated that the gap document is missing specific mention of youth issues (lack of services). Supplemental education services and cultural competency issues for youth are also missing from the gap list. This includes childcare (employment) and public school systems (ESL). It was recommended to add information about the need for ESL services in public school systems under Language Barriers.

It was mentioned that educational issues should be it's own heading. It's also important that the community be educated about refugee issues (media, legislators, etc). One suggestion was to add community education under Community Development and Preservation.

Laura Durrant made a comment that she helped with World Refugee Day and increased financial support could make this a great opportunity to help address community development.

Garth Mangum asked to what extent our problem is the lack of having ESL programs, facilities, capacity, etc. or access. Is the issue getting more ESL or making it more accessible like Hartland Apartments or home based instruction?

Another comment was made regarding youth services. Many families are being broken up because of the lack of services for refugee families. There are protective services issues. There needs to be additional cultural sensitivity before children are removed from homes in certain circumstances.

Dorothy Owen suggested transportation be its own issue. Getting to work, school, etc. are critical issues. Driving is very expensive (gas, insurance, etc.)

Amadou Niang, President of United Africans of Utah, commented regarding ESL issues. He is a certified ESL instructor and works for a program in Granite District. Access is definitely a problem. There is no one African student in the Granite District's program. There is space available but people need to be informed of class availability and ensure they can get to the classes. He also considered access in terms of a solution. The resources are sometimes there but how can we make those resources available and convince those in need to take advantage of those resources. ESL competes with so many different things (Maslow's needs hierarchy).

Laura Durrant commented that some single mothers on FEP can't access ESL. It's a lot to ask a refugee parent to go to work all day and then go to ESL at night.

Dr. Madeaus Geo Ja Ja asked that attention be focused on bullet number four. This could also apply to state service providers. Employees can lack cultural sensitivity. The seven agencies helping refugees are missing these core values: access, inclusion, client empowerment, they don't have a holistic approach to program delivery processes, lack of respect for those they are serving. Most programs do not what he describes as cultural sensitivity, or the development of communities or collaboration between refugees and service providers and there is little or no accountability.

Rosie Hunter commented that there should be more emphasis on public health, Medicare, childcare and education. Although there is a Medicaid item listed on the gaps document, we need a bullet concerning access to health care in general. There are many public health issues such as housing units and we need a separate bullet for public education.

Stanford Ade commented that the list of core values that were mentioned earlier need to be addressed, especially the lack of accountability of service providers.

Amy Wiley commented that an additional bullet is needed under Case Management for housing needs. Many refugees are not on public housing lists and it can take years to obtain public housing.

A social work student from the University of Utah commented that there should be an item about transportation to medical appointments. This can be added under the Transportation bullet.

Marilyn Nunez commented that she would like to add that a large number of students have public transportation problems. The cost is excessive. She also mentioned funding for ESL programs. Even though there is money available it's not enough. ESL is still under funded.

Garth Mangum suggested a bullet under case management for mentoring. Mentors are needed to build trusting relationships that could really help refugees.

David Chavez wanted to reinforce earlier comments regarding funding. Providers are receiving one fourth of the funding that they received five years ago. He also referred to Mr. Silverman's presentation about working with other ethnic groups to see if we can leverage resources.

Jelena Paralic from the Department of Health commented that she would like to add that even though many case managers are refugees they lack the language skills specific to individual customers. Languages should be matched with clients needs.

Buba Roth asked if she could make a Powerpoint presentation. She would like to revisit the core values – she would like to say that there are gaps and the real problem. It took seventeen years for four people to look into problems related to refugees (Tani Downing, Verdi white, Governor Huntsman, and now Palmer DePaulis). Until the four of them spoke up, no one had addressed the key issue of respect. Until we resolve the lack of respect, until you have people that are culturally competent in places providing services, there will continue to be problems.

Cristie Chesler, Department of Health, suggested adding a bullet concerning the time it takes to get a Medicaid card under medical issues. Dental and vision are also important issues. It is also important to have a primary care provider or a medical home.

Amadu Niang wanted to make a very brief comment about these meetings. He commented that this is not the place to promote our own organizations. If we all

do that we will not address the problems we're here to discuss. Each time there is a brief historical lecture about the Utah Consortium.

Gerald Brown (ISED) commented that the biggest issue here is funding. Federal money will not get us there. It's great that the Governor is involved. We need a partnership with the private sector. Local foundations can be a great help. Unless we have those partners on board to find the resources we need to solve these problems, government can't do it alone.

Mr. DePaulis indicated that foundation representatives will be invited to attend future meetings.

Shu Cheng commented that state departments, providers, etc. are seen as the best place for the successful resettlement of refugees. The refugee providers and oversight structure needs to be addressed. What are the goals that we can establish as a State? The Federal Government has well defined goals but many of them don't apply to other providers of services. For example, if FEP can't support ESL for refugee parents, possibly an alternative system can be developed. Do we need a dialogue about what our goals for successful resettlement are? We need to look at the whole picture. There is a lack of vision for refugee services in the State of Utah. This is not limited to state government. He would like to see refugee groups work together. For example, what are the basic levels of ESL we want to achieve before sending refugees to jobs, what is a standard level of housing?

A question was asked by Dr. McLeous Geo Ja Ja regarding the responsibility of the Office of Ethnic Affairs concerning refugees? Mr. DePaulis stated that the Office of Ethnic Affairs is for all ethnic communities to access services in the State of Utah. There are two people that have responsibility to draw refugees effectively into the community. There are four directors that are not here tonight and have not attended. Core values should be core problems.

Rosie Hunter commented that consulting the refugee community about how to develop services and how to meet their needs is important. The knowledge of how to do what we need to do in systems lie within the refugee communities. The Hartland Apartments are a good example. When we do new programming we meet with community leaders and get answers. We need to do more of that.

Mr. Brown commented that in most states refugee services are driven by the Federal Government. Nobody thinks about going beyond the Federal Government's structure. Utah now has enough ethnic minorities, refugees, etc. that we need to take ownership of the problem ourselves. We need to take ownership of the issue generally.

Laura Durrant wanted to follow up on earlier comments. It seems to her that there is a lack of coordination among service providers and there should be a

coordinating office and asked where it should be located? Where can these questions go and where can there be accountability. This could be a liaison within one of the Departments so all service providers can coordinate. We'll add this issue under the list of core values (problems).

Someone also suggested having organization charts or other information about the processes to be used. There is a lack of documentation about how refugees move through the systems.

A representative from the Department of Human Services commented that this seems like *déjà vu*. Seventeen years ago we were talking about the same issues. Youth Corrections does a flow chart that shows point A from point B. We need an understanding of the process among the community. We have to be careful, there's a confusion sometimes, between refugees and immigrants. This goes to the public awareness piece. We can't afford to compete with immigrant services. What's the difference? How can we collaborate with other groups? How can we find some solutions that serve both groups?

Stanford Ade commented that we are all here planning the future of refugees. His question is if we have feedback directly from refugees? Are we planning for ourselves or for refugees? There is a lack of a feedback process for refugees themselves.

We need to add some bullets to Youth Services. Supplemental education services, more parent/child/school communication, cross cultural competency between community and young refugees, and gang and crime prevention should be added.

Someone commented that volunteers and mentors are critical. A representative of the Inner City Project commented that there is a lack of information or training for volunteers. The Inner City Project may be helping with dental work when the refugee may be already receiving services from another organization or when a translator is available. Volunteers need to be part of the process and be involved. There is nothing well established for volunteers.

Garth Mangum wants to add a bullet about the simultaneous availability of employment and education and training under the Employment and Self-Sufficiency item.

Aden Batar commented that he didn't see anything about the lack of resources for elderly refugees at risk of losing state or federal benefits.

Shu Cheng thinks there is a lack of information about program results for existing programs. There is no centralized place to view results. It is difficult to see outcomes. He would also like to go back to the youth services list. He's not sure whether the list addresses some of the harder issues. Some of the youth issues

are a lot more serious and involve the court and intensive services. The working group should address more severe youth problems. Sometimes family members are not even aware of problems because of cultural issues. He sees how communities can help with this issue so generational issues can be addressed.

Amadu commented that there is one key issue that has been talked about in the African Association that he thinks needs to be mentioned here. There is a lack of a venue for conflict resolution in the African community in the sense that in Africa there is a Council for Elders and when there are problems within the family, instead of calling police, the Council of Elders is called. That structure does not exist in Utah. This lack creates a lot of problems for the families. Things that could be solved easily get blown out of proportion because there is a lack of this conflict resolution process or system.

Gerald Brown commented that under Demand for Service, the fourth bullet needs to be under community development. There is no mechanism in the current system to empower refugee organizations. You can't have good integration unless you have powerful refugee community organizations. Conflict resolution is an example. You get a good organization to do it. There are lots of things on the list that if we empowered the community organizations they could address these gaps. We need a mechanism to empower and develop capacity of refugee community organizations.

Buba Roth commented that some of her organization's members are not served. Some members of this community don't get any services. Her other comment is that one of their main causes is homeland security. At the end Buba will be giving out flyers about public safety. Buba said the mechanism Mr. Brown spoke about does exist but they don't have funds to be maintained.

A comment was made that all evening long we have been mentioning lack of funding. We don't ask how effective the current funds are being used. That's the most important thing. He knows that some funding that is supposed to be used for refugees facilities is distributed to people that do not have the capacity to deliver projects. It is not always a lack of funding but sometime it's about how its being spent. We should be accountable for funding available to refugees.

Lina Smith commented that she didn't see anything specific to women's issues. She would like that added. She also referred to her experience with refugees and compliance with federal laws. She would like to see a train the trainer developed for associations so they can train their own communities. Let them take charge of this responsibility.

James Whitaker asked whether there were legal services issues. Lina Smith answered that yes, it's a big issue. Someone commented that once you get in the legal system it's out of control. Need information about housing, domestic violence, etc.

Laura Durrant wanted to respond to what others said about training. It's important for newly arrived refugees to understand what happens here vs. what happens in country of origin. It works both ways. Need cultural orientation to also help refugees understand what's required in this country so they don't get in trouble. Also, what Amy Wiley mentioned about the Inner City Mission, if we don't train them appropriately, we have more problems than we solve. There is a need to ensure we train communities, refugees, and volunteers so they can truly be helpful.

Jelena Paralic from the Department of Health asked if we would have another chance to get together? We used to have a service provider's conference once a year where everyone met and shared best practices, ideas, etc.

Training around legal issues can be about basic things such as contractual law (rental agreements), car insurance, etc. There are also non-criminal aspects. The other thing is a need for positive contact with police. Police serve different roles in different cultures. There is a need for better education around public safety.

Gerald Brown commented that a lot of what Laura Durrant and others are saying could be theoretically taken care of if we can get a refugee czar or coordinator with the power and funding to address these issues. We need a coordinator, czar, ombudsman, etc.

Joseph Oyee, Sudanese Community, commented that we should add a bullet of cultural differences. There is a difference between people in the working group and people in community. We need to develop understanding between refugees and the community.

A representative from the Salt Lake Valley Health Department commented that we got into a lot of detail around these areas. Are there lists of resources? Do local groups understand what everyone is doing? Is there a guide of some sort? This would help identify gaps and duplications of services.

Is it possible for refugees to choose which program they get (match v. RCA)?

Shu Cheng wanted to follow up on Dr. Silverman's presentation last session about interaction between programs for refugees and the legislative body. He hasn't seen any interaction at all. State funding needs to come from the legislature but there haven't been any requests.

Osmon Ahmed would like to add to what Shu Cheng said. This requires refugee civic participation. This is a huge gap in society. This includes refugees who have been here longer than new arrivals.

Gary Edwards commented there is a lack of recognition at the legislative level of a need in the refugee community. It's not on their radar screen.

We have identified lack of understanding in the Governor's Office and the Legislature, etc. but we should add Ethnic offices to the list. Problems should be funneled through the Ethnic Affairs Offices. This is where things start.

Osmon Ahmed commented that Palmer has helped individuals meet with Governor Huntsman about some of these issues. He was very helpful in the facilitation of this meeting.

Kevin Davis commented that there is a lack of education of the Medicaid enrollment process, especially open enrollment. Lina commented there needs to be a longer open enrollment period. Laura asked whose responsibility it is to notify people of open enrollment periods.

Osmon Ahmed explained the open enrollment process and what's done to promote programs now.

John Erloch commented that it should be a goal to involve legislators in this meeting. We should all involve our own legislators.

The list of gaps will be posted on the Web site by early next week. We'll also make some copies tonight if you want to wait for them. We won't be meeting in February because of the legislature. Our next meeting is scheduled for March 24, 2007.

Mr. DePaulis thanked everyone for their comments and input. Now we're going to switch to a solution forum. We'll start trying to define solutions to these issues and gaps. At some time we'll need to prioritize these issues.